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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL BG
SUBJECT: MINORITY ACTIVIST KILLED BY ARMY SOLDIERS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Geeta Pasi, reason para 1.4(d)

¶1. (SBU) Another allegation of torture and extra-judicial killing made its way into the local press this week. According to newspapers and witness reports, army and police personnel removed four members of the Christian Garo minority in the Madhupur Forest area from a micro-bus in the early afternoon of March 18. Two were eventually released, but one, Garo activist Choilesh Risil, died and another, Pratap Sangma, was severely injured.

¶2. (C) Father Eugene Homrich, a Catholic missionary well-known to the Embassy community who works with the Garo population in Madhupur, told us that the four were detained by army personnel and loaded into the back of a pick-up truck. The soldiers took them to a nearby army camp. At some point, two men were released and were told they could pick up the bodies of Risil and Sangma later. According to Homrich, early on March 19 soldiers deposited Sangma badly injured in the middle of a local village. Sangma told witnesses he and Risil were bound and badly beaten by the soldiers, and that Risil had died from his injuries. Later that day, the army took Risil's body to the Madhupur Government Hospital. The body was later returned to his family for burial. The surviving victim, Pratap, sustained severe injuries and is now in the care of the Catholic mission in Madhupur.

¶3. (C) Former Madhupur member of parliament Dr. Abdur Razzaq of the Awami League told us Risil was a prominent Garo activist. He said the death would deal a severe blow to the indigenous rights movement in the area and was designed to intimidate the Garo population.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador will raise this case with the appropriate government officials, and we will continue to report on it as we gather more information.

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